

## CLASSICAL BIOGRAPHY

† HÄGG (T.) *The Art of Biography in Antiquity*. Pp. xvi + 496. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Cased, £70, US\$110. ISBN: 978-1-107-01669-9.

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This book is a learned study of biographical texts from both the Greek and the Roman traditions, ranging in time from the Greek Classical period to the Second Sophistic. The appearance of ‘art’ in the title, rather than ‘history’, is meant to signal that H. does not intend to explain the origins or the evolution of the ‘biographical genre’ in the manner of, for instance, A. Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (1971). Rather, H.’s project is to offer readings of a wide variety of extant biographical texts and to avoid speculation about texts that have been lost or are only conjectured to have existed in the first place. He adopts what he calls an inclusive definition of biography: ‘a literary text of book length telling the life story of an historical individual from cradle to grave (or a substantial part of it)’ (p. ix). An even more inclusive application of this definition allows him to consider not only texts called ‘Lives’ by their authors or by tradition, but also Socratic dialogues, encomia, the gospels and some of Lucian’s satirical essays. In a series of brief prolegomena (pp. 1–9), H. identifies several general topics related to the study of biographical writing, his discussion of which establishes his assumptions and approach. Among these topics (which include ‘truth and creative imagination’, ‘private and public life’ and ‘fiction, fact, and historicity’) H. questions whether we should consider ancient biography as a genre at all, preferring instead to view it as ‘more subject matter than form’ and suggesting that as regards biographical writing, the notion of genre ‘easily slips out of the scholarly grasp’ (p. 3). In declining to define ancient biography narrowly or to track its evolution as a genre, H. allows himself the freedom to consider each of his selected texts (more than twenty, in addition to the biographical series of Nepos, Plutarch and Suetonius) on its own terms.

Despite his *recusatio*, H. does indeed provide illuminating insight into the development of the biographical form of writing in the ancient world. This is especially true for his readings of the earliest texts in his collection, where he highlights the biographical tendencies of their authors and demonstrates an early Greek interest in the character and habits of important literary and political figures. The first chapter is the most enlightening and informative in this regard. This is where H. interprets texts from biography’s salad days, before authors openly declared their works to be *vitae* or *bioi* and used those terms to set their readers’ expectations. For instance, in the chapter’s first section, ‘Glimpses of a Prehistory’, H. reads Ion of Chios’ well-known story about Sophocles stealing a kiss as a ‘biographical snapshot’, the sort of characterising anecdote phrased as a personal recollection that would be used regularly by Xenophon and Plato in their writing about Socrates in the next generation. H. even suggests that Plutarch, writing when biography was well established, had an appreciation for Ion’s early ‘biographical method’, based on his use of Ion as a source for the *Cimon* and *Pericles* (pp. 12–15). Thus, without arguing too closely for direct influences, H. none the less shows how early biographical tendencies in Greek prose literature did indeed manifest themselves repeatedly and grow more pronounced over time. These tendencies comprise the intellectual thread that he uses to weave together the various texts that he reads in the first chapter. In addition to the Socratic works of Plato and Xenophon, H. includes Isocrates’ *Evagoras* and Xenophon’s *Agésilas*, and he concludes his survey of the Classical period, as one might expect, with the *Education of Cyrus*.

In the second chapter, H. comes to the Hellenistic Period, a time when biographical writing seems to have become established as a recognised form but from which no full text survives. The lost works of this period have given rise to speculation about their form and development, and H. briefly summarises Leo's theory (*Die griechisch-römische Biographie nach ihrer literarischen Form* [1901]) that two strands of biographical writing were prominent, the 'scholarly' Alexandrian strand and the more 'artistic' Peripatetic strand, for which Suetonius and Plutarch, respectively, eventually became the primary exemplars. H. returns quickly to interpretation of the texts, such as they are, presenting fragments of Aristoxenus, Satyrus, Hermippus and Antigonos of Carystus. In the third chapter, H. takes up what he calls 'open biography', following Konstan's notion of an 'open text' ('The *Alexander Romance*: the Cunning of the Open Text', *Lexis* 16 [1998], 123–38), which is the result of an accumulation of material over a long period of time and from a wide variety of sources. His examples are the *Life of Aesop*, the *Alexander Romance* and the *Life of Homer* ascribed to Herodotus. Although these texts retain their biographical (i.e. cradle-to-grave) form, H. demonstrates how the 'liberal admittance policy' (p. 100) of the various authors has resulted in a fragmented, and sometimes contradictory, narrative structure and inconsistent characterisation of the subjects.

H. turns next to the gospels (Chapter 4) before interpreting what are universally considered the core authors of ancient biography: Nepos, Tacitus (for his *Agricola*), Suetonius and Plutarch (Chapters 5 and 6). In introducing the gospels, H. presents an excellent overview of the scholarly debate about whether they are a form of biography; this discussion and the corresponding bibliography will be essential to anyone coming to this problem for the first time. But as with the Hellenistic biographies, H. quickly sets theory aside and dives back into interpretation. The book becomes even less theoretical as H. moves on to Roman biography and Plutarch. Here argumentation for the presence of formal biographical elements or innovations in the texts gives way almost completely to more descriptive readings, in which H. attempts to characterise the biographers' aims and methods. H. is very detailed in his interpretation of selected, or representative, texts, but because the corpora are large, his characterisations of the authors can be quite general. None the less, his readings are intelligent and his conclusions sound, and so despite his covering well-trodden ground, there is still much to learn from his insight and long experience with this literature.

The final and longest chapter covers a variety of texts from the Second Sophistic, with a focus on Lives of philosophers and holy men. H. begins with three quasi-biographical texts from Lucian (*Alexander or the False Prophet*, *On the Death of Peregrinus* and *Demonax*), then moves on to Diogenes Laertius, Philostratus (*Apollonius of Tyana*, *Lives of the Sophists*), Porphyry (*Pythagoras*, *Plotinus*), Iamblichus (*Pythagoras*) and the anonymous *Life of Secundus*. The emphasis throughout is on intellectual biography and the representation (or in some cases criticism) of philosophical ideas through the lives of famous teachers.

The book concludes with a brief epilogue on Christian biography, suggestions for further reading, a massive bibliography and a single index of names and subjects. H. clearly intends the book to serve as an introduction to many of the texts and authors he presents. As such, in addition to the resources for further study, he is careful in each case to give an overview of the author's life and a sense of the text beyond its biographical value. He is, moreover, generous in his citation of other scholars and even-handed in his presentation of their views.

As H. relates in his preface, he completed his manuscript around the time he was diagnosed with a fatal disease. The book was seen through the press by Stephen Harrison and

published posthumously. It serves, therefore, both as a memorial to a learned scholar and as a legacy for those still in the field.

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## GREEK MEDICINE

JOUANNA (J.) *Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen. Selected Papers*. Translated by Neil Allies. Edited with a Preface by Philip van der Eijk. (Studies in Ancient Medicine 40.) Pp. xx + 403. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012. Cased, €146, US\$203. ISBN: 978-90-04-20859-9.

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This volume contains English translations of sixteen papers by J. published between 1980 and 2008, often in ‘rather specialised volumes’, as the editor writes, with a sense of understatement.

J.’s *Hippocrates* (English translation by M.B. DeBevoise, 1999) is well known. He has edited, with much innovative philological skill and detailed commentaries, numerous Hippocratic treatises: *Nature of Man* (1975, 2002<sup>2</sup>), *Diseases II* (1983), *Breaths, The Art* (1988), *Ancient Medicine* (1990) (the Greek text of which formed the basis for M. Shiefsky’s translation and commentary, 2005), *Airs Waters Places* (1996), *Epidemics V and VII* (with the late M.D. Grmek, 2000), and *Sacred Disease* (2003); and he is now working on *Pronostic*. To this impressive list he recently added the newly rediscovered Galenic treatise *Avoiding Distress* (with V. Boudon-Millot and A. Pietrobelli, 2010). He also founded, with L. Bourgey, the *Colloques internationaux hippocratiques* (the fourteenth was held in Paris last year) and, with A. Garzya, the series of *Ecdotique des textes médicaux grecs*. A comprehensive list of his publications on ancient medicine is available in V. Boudon, A. Guardasole and C. Magdelaine (edd.), *La science médicale antique. Nouveaux regards* (2007), pp. 1–18. This selection, by van der Eijk (in consultation with J.), is divided into three ‘strands’: historical, literary and cultural context of Greek medicine; relationship to philosophy; and reception of Hippocratic medicine. Some papers, especially in the first two parts, may seem to duplicate chapters of his *Hippocrates*, but they were intended for a more scholarly public, and their translation is no doubt useful. Others, written after *Hippocrates*, add significant novelties, particularly (but not only) about post-Hippocratic medicine.

‘Egyptian Medicine and Greek Medicine’ stresses the ‘hypothetical nature’ (p. 7) of some suggested ‘influences’, and studies the evolution from the ‘prestige’ of Egyptian medicine to a ‘modest role’ (p. 17) in the Greek history of medicine. A further, also hypothetical, context would be Mesopotamian medicine, often neglected by Hippocratic scholars (see the recent volume *Advances in Mesopotamian Medicine from Hammurabi to Hippocrates*, ed. A. Attia, G. Buisson, M.J. Geller [2009]).

‘Politics and Medicine. The Problem of Change in *Regimen in Acute Diseases* and Thucydides (Book 6)’ analyses the ‘agreement’ between the Hippocratic text and Thucydides concerning two conceptions of therapy, and the subtle Thucydidean use of the medical metaphor, ‘as a precursor to both Plato and Aristotle’, about the comparison between leader and doctor (two other papers by J., not in this volume, study this comparison in Plato and Aristotle: *Ktēma* 4 [1979], 121–31 and 5 [1980], 257–66).